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S U P R E M A C Y

O F

St. P E T E R

A N D T H E

Bishops of *Rome* his Successors:

C O N S I D E R ' D I N A

S E R M O N

Preached at SALTERS-HALL,

January 23, 1734-5.

By DANIEL NEAL, M.A.

The SECOND EDITION.

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M A T T. xvi. 18, 19.

18. *And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

19. *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

WHEN the Christian religion was first preached among the Gentiles, it prevailed by its own divine excellence and purity ; but in process of time, the ambition and avarice of men deformed its native beauty, and weakened its influence, by blending it with worldly power, till by degrees the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which consists in righteousness and peace, was changed into a temporal monarchy over the bodies and souls of men under one sovereign Pontiff, who arrogated the title of *Successor of St. Peter*, and *Vicar-General of Christ upon Earth*.

When the *Roman* empire became Christian, the EMPERORS assumed the supreme power in ecclesiastical affairs, and maintained it some hundreds of years.^a They confirmed the elections of bishops, called councils, and established their canons by an Imperial edict : They appointed judges for religious causes, and deposed bishops that were lapsed into heresy. *Eusebius* therefore, in the life of *Constantine*, calls him *κοινος ἑταίρονος*, the general bishop, or director of all things relating to the external polity of the church. But when the empire was divided and broken, by the irruption of the barbarous nations, the bishop of *Rome* started his claim to a primacy of jurisdiction over all Christian bishops ; and taking advantage of the distractions of the empire, entirely threw off the Imperial yoke, about the IXth or Xth century, and assumed an absolute authority, not only over the Clergy, but over Kings and Emperors, and the whole Christian world, in all causes civil and ecclesiastical. Some ages after, there was a fierce contest about the supremacy of the Pope over the whole *collective body of the church*.^b And tho' this point was not absolutely determined in the council of *Trent*, *Bellarmino*, the celebrated *Romish* champion, and his followers, have declared it unlawful to appeal from the sentence of the Pope to any future general council.

'Tis

^a *Spanh. Ec. Hist. p. 1102.*

^b *Sec. xv.*

"Tis a vast and boundless empire of superstition and slavery that is formed upon this usurpation; persons of all ranks are bound to believe whatever the Pope decrees, and to obey all his *bulls* on pain of damnation. If sovereign princes dare resist him, or refuse obedience to his arbitrary and imperious dictates, the trumpet is sounded to sedition, subjects are absolved from their allegiance, and commanded to bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron. If his Holiness is pleased to interdict whole kingdoms, the publick worship of God must cease, and their temples be shut up till they return to their duty. ——— Vast contributions have been raised, and immense sums paid annually into the Pope's coffers, by *Peter's-pence*, *the first fruits and tenths of the clergy*, the sale of *indulgences*, *Agnus Dei's*, and other holy wares of the like kind, for the support of his unrighteous dominion. It was usual in *England*, before the reformation, to levy a *tenth*, and sometimes a *fifth* of all ecclesiastical livings, for the service of the church, or some expedition into the Holy Land, which considering the vast number of Religious Houses in those times, produced an incredible revenue. Upon a computation, made by order of king *Henry III.* in the year 1245, it appeared, that more money was carried out of *England* annually by the Pope's authority, than all the revenues of the crown put together. And without doubt, the

Fox's Acts and Mon. p. 325, 326.

the whole riches of the nation had been conveyed away thro' this channel, beyond recovery, had not the statutes of *Provisors* and *Premunire* taken place. — Fierce and bloody wars have been kindled in the Christian world by his direction, not to mention the more compendious ways of dispatching hereticks by poison or murdering now and then an hundred thousand in cold blood, as in the massacres of *Ireland*, *Paris*, and the valleys of *Piedmont*. Our nation has been a remarkable example of all these in their turns. Never did Popery triumph with less controul in all its false and bloody colours, than in this island for several hundred years. And when the all-wise Providence of God raised up those glorious instruments of the Reformation, who delivered us from such barefaced usurpation, our holy mother the church became as merciless as she had been tyrannical and insatiable, and in the greatness of her charity excommunicated our rulers, dissolved the government, and doomed our fore-fathers, with all their posterity, to temporal misery, and eternal perdition.

How monstrous and groundless soever this empire may appear, it has had the most publick and solemn sanctions of their church.

In the *Lateran* council it was decreed, “ That the *Roman* High-Priest holds a primacy over the universal church, as successor of “ *St. Peter*, prince of the apostles; that he is “ the true lieutenant of Christ, and head of “ the church; the father and doctor of all “ Christians,

“ Christians, to whom all power is committed
 “ to feed, direct, and govern the Catholick
 “ church under Christ.” Hence he claims
 the sole right of defining points of doctrine,
 and deciding controversies of faith, without
 liberty of appeal, even to a general council;
 and of binding and loosing, opening and shut-
 ting the gates of heaven at his pleasure. To
 secure these powers, with many others of the
 like extravagant nature, he exacts the most
 solemn oaths from his clergy, and particular-
 ly from the bishops, who swear, “ To be
 “ faithful and obedient to St. *Peter*, and to
 “ the holy *Roman* church, and our Lord the
 “ Pope his successor, to receive and execute
 “ all his commands, to discover all plots and
 “ conspiracies against him, to preserve and
 “ defend the royalties of St. *Peter* to the ut-
 “ most of their power, and to persecute and
 “ oppose all hereticks, schismaticks, and re-
 “ bels to our said sovereign lord the Pope, or
 “ his successors.”^d So that all clergymen of
 the church of *Rome*, not born within the
 verge of the Ecclesiastical State, are subjects of
 a foreign power, and bound by the most sa-
 cred ties to lay violent hands on all who
 profess a religion different from their own.—
 Nor is less care taken to secure the allegiance
 of the Lay-converts, who upon their reception
 into the *Romish* communion, are obliged to
 make the following solemn profession of their
 faith: “ I acknowledge the holy, catholick,
 “ apostolick,

^d *Spanh. Ecc. Hist.* p. 1830.

“ apostolick *Roman* church, for the mother
 “ and mistress of all churches, and I promise
 “ true obedience to the bishop of *Rome*, suc-
 “ cessor to St. *Peter*, prince of the apostles,
 “ and vicar of Jesus Christ; and I do un-
 “ doubtedly receive and profess all other
 “ things defined and declared by the sacred
 “ canons, general councils, and particularly
 “ the council of *Trent*, and I do anathema-
 “ tize all things contrary thereunto, and all
 “ heresies which the church has condemned,
 “ rejected, and anathematized.”

This is the current doctrine of the *Roman* church, which no man can reject without being reputed an enemy to the Apostolick See, and is esteemed of such importance, that Pope *Boniface VIII.* in one of his decrees has declared and pronounced it of *necessity to salvation*: Cardinal *Bellarmino* says, the doctrine of the supremacy is a *fundamental article* of their church: And we must concur with them in allowing this to be the basis of the whole controversy, and if well established, that their church is built upon a *rock*; but if it stands condemned by the concurrent testimony of Scripture, antiquity, and reason, the foundations of Popery are blown up, and the unwieldy fabrick falls to pieces.

Let us therefore consider, *First*, the evidence by which this extravagant claim is supported:

And then, the arguments that are brought to encounter it.

First,

First, *We are to consider the evidence which the Papists produce to support the above-mentioned supremacy.* Had our Lord appointed a vicar-general on earth, we might expect to meet not only with his name in Scripture, but with the time and manner of his instalment, and with the deed of conveyance to his successors, in the most plain and significant words; or at least that it should be read in every page of antiquity: But if the most ancient fathers of the church consent in any thing, it is in a general silence about this matter: The whole stress of the evidence is therefore laid upon the following obscure and metaphorical passages of Scripture.

The principal of which is in the first verse of my text; *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.* Here they argue (in their late profession of faith for the reception of converts into the church) “from the very
 “ name of *Peter*, or *Cephas*, which signifies
 “ a *Rock*; which name our Lord, who does
 “ nothing without reason, gave to him who
 “ before was called *Simon*, to signify that he
 “ should be as a *rock* or *foundation* upon
 “ which he would build his church.” But some learned men interpret the *rock*, of the confession of *Peter’s* faith, mentioned a verse or two before, where our Lord having asked his disciples, whom men said he was, addresses to his apostles; *Whom say ye that I am?* *Simon Peter* answered and said, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.* Whereupon, after

a commendation of his faith, our Lord replies, v. 16. *I say also unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon THIS ROCK, that is, upon the confession thou hast made of me, I will build my church.* This interpretation is countenanced by many doctors and fathers of the antient church. St. *Chrysostome*, in his comment upon the place, says, Upon the rock, that is, upon *the faith of Peter's confession*, I will build my church. And again, He did not build the church upon the *man Peter*, but upon his *faith*.^e *Theodoret*, St. *Austin*, and some of the Popish writers themselves, are of this mind.^f

But admitting, with St. *Cyprian* and others, *Peter* himself was the *rock*, What resemblance is there between a *rock* and a *governor*? at least, What assurance can we have, that the metaphor precisely imports this sense, when it may as fairly be interpreted to another? The *rock* of the church may signify its *foundation* or *beginning*, and thus it may have a particular respect to St. *Peter*, who laid the foundation of the first Christian church at *Jerusalem*, by his excellent sermon, *Acts* 2d,^g and made the first Gentile converts in *Cesarea*, according to the instructions he received afterwards, by a vision from heaven.^h And this was all the honour he claimed, when standing up in the council

^e *Chrysost.* in John i. 50.

^f More testimonies to this purpose may be seen in Dr. *Barrow's* learned treatise on the Supremacy, p. 56, &c.

^g Vid. *Whitby* in loc.

^h *Acts* x. 9, &c.

cil at Jerusalem; he said, *Men and brethren, ye know that a good while ago God chose me out among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word.*^h But in this work St. Peter could have no successor, because that would be in effect to say, the foundations of the Christian church were not yet laid, which was fully accomplished above sixteen hundred years ago.

But if by the *rock* we are to understand the foundation upon which *the church's faith is built*, it can have no particular reference to St. Peter, because the Scripture represents our Lord himself as the foundation and corner stone of his church: *The stone which the builders refused (says the Psalmist) the same is become the head of the corner.*ⁱ Which passage our Saviour applies to himself, *Matt. xxi. 42.* And it is an honour in which he will not be rival'd, for *other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, even Jesus Christ.*^k But next under him, the twelve apostles are the foundations and pillars of the Christian church, who were equally commissioned to preach the Gospel to all nations, and furnished with extraordinary abilities and powers for that purpose: *Ye are built (says St. Paul to the Ephesians) upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, i. e. upon their doctrine, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.*^l Here is no particular mention of St. Peter, which

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one

^h Acts xv. 7. ⁱ Psal. cxviii. 20. ^k 1 Cor. iii. 11.
^l Eph. xi. 30.

one might reasonably have expected, had he been prince of the apostles. *You say the church is founded on Peter, (says St. Hierom) but the same is built upon all the apostles. The twelve apostles were the immutable pillars of orthodoxy, the rock of the church, (saith another antient author). And St. Basil adds, That Peter was but one of the mountains upon which the Lord did promise to build his church.^m* This is the language of all antiquity ; and whatever rank Peter might hold among the apostles, or what peculiar regards he might claim from his countrymen the Jews, as the *apostle of the circumcision*, it is certain he did not equal the apostle Paul among the Gentiles : St. Paul was properly their apostle, and he glories in it ; *I am the apostle of the Gentiles (says he) and Grace was given me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles :ⁿ* In this province he laboured more abundantly than the rest,^o and with greater success, striving to preach the Gospel where Christ had not been named, lest he should build upon another's foundation ; on which account he certainly deserves the highest honours.

But if after all, the Papists will build their church upon the *supremacy of St. Peter*, let them remember that upon this very *rock* it has once split ; the *supremacy* being the first point of controverfy that made way for the Reformation. This cut off the *British Islands* from

^m *Vid. Barrow, p. 58.*

ⁿ Rom. xi. 13.

^o Rom. xv. 20.

from that idolatrous communion, and seems to make a reconciliation impracticable. Had this been given up, *England* and *Rome* had been united more than once since that time; but this keeps her wounds open, and is, in my humble opinion, that stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, which will one time or other fall upon her, and grind her to powder.

The second passage to support the supremacy of *St. Peter* follows in the latter part of my text; *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* “Where (says the late Catechism) under the figure of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, our Lord ensured to *Peter* the chief authority in his church; as when a king gives to one of his officers the keys of a city, he thereby declares that he makes him governor of that city.” Are the keys then the ensigns of supreme authority? The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had them in our Saviour’s time, and yet were subject to the High-priest; and ’tis no unusual thing for masters of families to entrust their keys with servants without authorising them to dispose of their treasure. The plain meaning of the passage is this: The *kingdom of heaven* is the kingdom of the Messiah, and the *keys* are *St. Peter*’s commission to open the gates of it to the *Gentiles*. It follows, *whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven*; that is, what-

whatever you shall declare to be forbidden under pain of my displeasure, shall render the offender obnoxious to my wrath; and whatsoever things ye shall loose on earth, tho' once required by the law of *Moses*, men shall be allowed to do them without incurring my displeasure. But whatever is meant by this grant, nothing was peculiarly promised to *St. Peter*, because in other places it is given in common to all the apostles, *Matth. xviii. 18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever YE shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever YE shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* Again, when our Lord appeared to his apostles after his resurrection, *he breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the holy Ghost; as the Father has sent me, even so I send you; whosesoever sins YE remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins YE retain, they are retained.*^p The apostles had the discerning of spirits, and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost to direct their judgments in the exercise of their extraordinary powers; and if his *Holiness of Rome* can convince the world, he is possessed of the same infallible Spirit, I think all mankind should kiss his slipper, and apply to him in the most humble manner, for an admission into the kingdom of heaven.

A third passage insisted upon by the advocates for *St. Peter's* supremacy is *Luke xxii. 31, 32. The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have thee, that he might winnow thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy*

^p John xx. 23.

thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. In which text (say the Romanists) “ our Lord not only declared “ his particular concern for *Peter*, in praying “ that his faith might not fail, but also committed to him the care of his brethren, the “ other apostles, in charging him to confirm “ and strengthen them.” The words have a manifest reference to St. *Peter*’s denial of his master in the high-priest’s hall, when his faith was in such danger of failing, that if our Lord had not looked upon him, it might never have recovered; but when he should be restored, he exhorts him to confirm and strengthen his brethren, who, not being able to abide the like trial, forsook their Master and fled, when he was apprehended in the garden. What relation this can have to St. *Peter*’s supremacy over the rest of the apostles, or to the pretended jurisdiction of his successors over the whole christian world, is hard to discover. The primitive Christians encouraged each other to suffer martyrdom; and the confessors and martyrs in Queen *Mary*’s days strengthened and confirmed their brethren in prison, by conference, by exhortations and prayers, without claiming an authority over their faith. Men must be reduced to very great extremities, when they build so weighty a fabrick upon so slender a foundation.

The last passage of Scripture insisted on is *John* xxi. 15, 16, 17. where our Lord, in allusion to *Peter*’s having denied him thrice, commands

mands him three times *to feed his lambs and his sheep*. In which text (says the late Catechism) “our Lord in a most solemn manner thrice committed to St. *Peter* the care of his whole flock, of all his sheep without exception, that is, of the whole church.” Who could imagine unlimited sovereignty could be contained in this harmless precept! And what is there in it peculiar to *Peter*? Was not the same commission given to all the apostles, when they were commanded to teach all nations? And is not the like charge given to every bishop or pastor of the church? When the apostle *Paul* took leave of the elders of *Ephesus*, he commanded them to take heed of the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers *to feed the church of God*^a, which he had purchased with his blood; and St. *Peter*, in one of his catholick epistles to the strangers that were scattered abroad thro’ *Pontus, Galatia* and *Cappadocia*, exhorts the elders among them *to feed their several flocks*; taking the oversight of them not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.

This is the whole evidence by which this important doctrine is supported. If then it should be admitted, St. *Peter* was one of the chief of the apostles, as being the eldest and first in order, and that he stood high in the esteem of our Lord, on account of his courage and boldness in his cause; yet it does not appear

^a Acts xx. 28.

pear from the texts above-mention'd, or any other, that an *authority* was given him over the rest of the apostles; much less that he was constituted head of the universal church, and vicar-general of Christ upon earth.

We proceed, in the *second place*, to produce the arguments from scripture and antiquity, which demonstrate the falseness of this claim.

And first, *There is not the least mention of such an officer in scripture.* If Peter had been appointed primate of the apostles, with jurisdiction over the whole christian church, is it consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God not to mention it in express words, especially if the knowledge of it is of the utmost importance to the very being of Christianity, and the eternal happiness of mankind? But is any thing like this recorded in the whole New Testament? Surely St. Paul must have been guilty of a very great omission, when he was enumerating the several officers of the Christian church, not to mention the CHIEF: For he says no more, than that our Lord gave *some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.*^r And more expressly in his epistle to the Corinthians; *God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, and after that miracles and gifts.*^s If our Lord had constituted a supreme head, should it not rather have been, he hath set some in the church; first, a Pope; secondarily, apo-
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stles;

^r Ephes. iv. 8, 11.

^s 1 Cor. xii. 28.

bles; thirdly, *prophets*; and then *pastors* and *teachers*? But St. Paul knew no such officer.

Secondly, *Our Lord himself has frequently declared against a superiority among his apostles.* When there was a strife among them who should be greatest, he presently puts an end to it, not by naming the person, but by assuring them he intended no such thing. *The kings of the earth exercise lordship over their subjects; but ye shall not be so; but he that is greater, [i. e. in gifts or knowledge] let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve.^t* When two of the apostles, James and John, affected a pre-eminence above the rest, by desiring to sit, one at our Lord's right hand, and the other at his left in his kingdom, he rejected their suit, and check'd their ambition, *" by telling them they knew not what they asked; and when the other ten heard it, they were moved with indignation."^w* At another time, when a dispute arose among them who should be greatest, as soon as our Lord heard of it, *he sat down and called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.^x* And in his sermon against the Pharisees, he says to his disciples, *Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.^y*

Thirdly, *Neither did the apostles after our Lord's ascension into heaven admit it.* There is no instance in the New Testament of St. Peter's

^t Luke xxii. 24. ^w Mark x. 37, 38. ^w Mat. xx. 24.

^x Mark ix. 35. ^y Matth. xxiii. 8.

ter's setting himself up for head of the church, or laying his commands on the rest of the apostles, but rather the contrary. When the apostles at *Jerusalem* heard that the people at *Samaria* had received the word, *they sent Peter and John*² to pray for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; who, in obedience to their orders, readily undertook the journey, and discharged their trust. Nor did *Paul* and *Barnabas* appeal to *St. Peter* in the controversies that arose between them about the necessity of circumcision; but referr'd the question to all the apostles and elders at *Jerusalem*, who when they had consider'd it, return'd an answer,³ not in the name of *PETER*, by divine appointment prince of the apostles, and lieutenant-general of *Christ* upon earth; but in the common name of the apostles, elders, and brethren.^b Nor does *St. Peter* in his writings affect an authority over his brethren; there is nothing of the style or spirit of a

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love-

² Acts viii. 14.

³ Acts xv. 2, 23.

^b The fathers in express terms assert all the apostles to be co-ordinate in power and authority. *St. Cyprian* says, *Hoc erant utique & cæteri apostoli quod fuit Petrus, pari consortio præditi & honoris & potestatis*. The other apostles were that which *Peter* was, invested with an equality of honour and power. *St. Chrysostom* says, that *St. Paul* sheweth that each apostle did enjoy equal dignity, in *Gal. ii. 8.* and comparing *St. Paul* to *St. Peter*, he calls *St. Paul*, ἰσὺν αὐτῷ, equal in honour to him; adding, πλεον ἢ ἔτι ἐπὶ τῶν, for I will not as yet say any more, in *Gal. i. 8.* *St. Cyril*, *Hierom*, *Dionysius*, *Isidore*, and all the fathers of the three first centuries use the same language.

sovereign Pontiff in his catholick epistles, but the softest and most condescending language, like one that would be thought to be least of the apostles rather than the greatest. *The elders that are among you I exhort, who also am an ELDER, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.*^c And tho' St. Paul was born out of due time, and did not see our Lord in the flesh, yet in nothing was he behind the very CHIEF of the apostles;^d and with regard to St. Peter, he withstood him to the face; which is more than the stoutest Cardinal would venture to do, to his pretended successor at Rome. But,

Fourthly, *It does not appear that St. Peter was bishop of Rome.* I will not affirm, with some learned criticks, that St. Peter never was there, but it is more than probable he was not their bishop. *Baronius* and other Popish writers affirm, that St. Peter became bishop of Rome in the second year of *Claudius Cæsar*, A. C. XLII, and sat in the episcopal chair 25 years. And the late Catechism says, "He translated his chair from *Antioch* to Rome, and died bishop of that city." But they do not tell us how he became so; whether our Lord appointed him their bishop, or the apostles ordained him, or the people elected him, or he thrust himself into the office. Nor is there any account of it in scripture, or the ancient fathers. We read in the New Testament of St. Peter's being at *Jerusalem*, at *Antioch*, at

^c 1 Pet. v. 1.

^d Gal. ii. 11.

at *Babylon*, and at *Corinth*, but not once of his being at *Rome*, unless *Babylon* stands for that city, which the *Romanists* are not willing to admit upon other occasions. We are told of his travels thro' *Cappadocia*, *Sicilia*, *Pontus* and *Bythinia*, and most Parts of *Asia*; and yet, according to *St. Luke*, the chief of his famous acts were done in *Palestine*: so that if he was bishop of *Rome*, it must be allowed that for the most part he was a *non-resident*. But is it possible to suppose that *St. Peter* resided at *Rome* as bishop of that city, and that *St. Paul* in his epistle to the *Romans*, written fifteen years after his supposed translation, should not salute him among the rest of the brethren, whose names he mentions in the sixteenth chapter? Nor in his epistle to the *Galatians*, *Ephefians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians*, and second to *Timothy*, all written from *Rome*, where he lived two whole years in his own hired house; not once send his salutation among others to the several churches? He was certainly not at *Rome*, when *St. Paul*, writing from that city to the *Colossians*, says that *Tychicus*, *Onesimus*, *Aristarchus*, *Marcus* and *Justus* were alone his fellow-labourers, which had been a comfort to him; ^e nor when *St. Paul* made his first defence before *Cæsar*, and said, *That no man stood with him, but all men forsook him*; no, nor at his second appearing before *Nero*, when the time of his departure was at hand; ^g for having sent the salutations of all the

^e Vid. *Spanheim*, p. 536, 537.

^f *Col. iv. 11.*

^g *2 Tim. iv. 16, 21.*

the brethren to *Timothy*, and particularly of *Eubulus*, *Pudens*, *Linus* and *Claudia*, he takes no notice of *Peter*; which is unpardonable, if he was then bishop of the city. The writers of the first age are also silent upon this head. Many legends and fabulous reports were raised of *St. Peter* after his death; but (says the learned *Joseph Scaliger*) from the end of the Acts of the apostles to the time of *Pliny* the younger, (who lived under the Emperor *Trajan*) there is nothing certain in the history of the church.

Besides, 'tis hardly credible that *St. Peter*, being the *chief apostle*, and a *general officer* in the church, should condescend to become bishop of a single city, and is as great a disparagement to his character, as if the general of an army should lay down his commission to become captain of a private company; for the *two Offices* are hardly consistent in one person. The apostles were commissioned to preach the gospel in all nations, but a *bishop* is to reside in his diocese, and feed the particular flock committed to his charge. If then *St. Peter* was an *apostle*, he could not perform the duty of a *bishop* by residing in one city or neighbourhood; and if he was a *bishop*, he could not discharge the office of an *apostle* by travelling into distant countries. So that here is a failure in the foundation; for if *St. Peter* was not *bishop of Rome*, 'tis impossible the present Pope should be his successor. But,

Fifthly, *If we should admit that St. Peter was bishop of Rome, the grant of the supremacy might be only personal, and terminate with himself.*

self. For it is agreed on both sides, that the Scripture makes no mention of *Peter's successors*; and we all know the apostolical office did not descend to after ages. The Catechism says, "that it is evident by the unanimous consent of the fathers, and the tradition of the church in all ages, that the commission given to St. *Peter* descended to the Popes or bishops of *Rome*." But I may venture to challenge all that is between this and *Rome* to prove such consent; the fathers never dream'd of an universal monarch over the whole church, and are entirely silent about it; but if they were not, neither their authority, nor the dark and obscure tradition of later ages ought to avail against scripture and reason. Does it follow, because Christ said to *Peter*, *upon this rock I will build my church*, that therefore he meant it of his successors; when there is no intimation of an entail throughout the whole New Testament, nor any communication of his apostolical gifts? Besides, if St. *Peter* was bishop of *Antioch* seven years before his pretended translation to *Rome*, why should not his successors in that See have the better claim? For the story of his translation by a special command from Christ, is an exploded fable; but none of the bishops as yet put in their claim to the supremacy. When the Empire became Christian, the bishops of the chief cities claimed the first rank among their brethren, but *His Holiness* of *Rome* had no higher title than *Dominus frater*, and *Comminister*, a Brother and Fel-

low.

low-Servant, for several ages. Pope Gregory I. who lived six hundred years after Christ, ^f abhorred the title of *Oecumenical* or *universal Bishop*, calling it a diabolical usurpation, and the forerunner of antichrist; and he gives these reasons for it in his Epistles, because it was never given to St. *Peter*; because none of the bishops of *Rome* till that time had assumed it; because it was contrary to the canons, to the decrees of the fathers, and an affront to Almighty God himself. The Bishop of *Rome* then did not presume to call councils by his own sovereign authority, nor sit as judge in controversies of faith, much less to depose sovereign princes; nay, he had not so much as a casting voice, nor so small a preference as to sign the *Canons* always in the first place. The four first general councils were convened by the express command of the *Roman Emperors*, who presided in person, or by their deputies; but the Pope's supremacy was not thought of for above 500 years after Christ, nor obtained after many struggles till almost a thousand.

Sixthly, If we should grant for argument's sake, that the supremacy descended to St. *Peter's* successors in the See of *Rome*, we shall find it almost impossible to derive the succession in an uninterrupted line through the several ages of the church. And yet the Popish catechism says, that "those only who can derive their lineage from the apostles are the heirs of the apostles, and consequently they alone can claim
" a right

“ a right to the scriptures, to the administration of the sacraments, or any share in the pastoral office; it is their proper inheritance which they have received from the apostles, and the apostles from Christ.” Let us therefore examine this line, upon which the validity of all Christian administrations depends; if this should fail or be interrupted, the whole Christian church is lost, for nobody can then claim a right to the scriptures or any part of the pastoral office.

Now the successors of *St. Peter* should certainly be *good men*, and endued with an apostolick spirit. *A bishop* (says the Apostle) *must be blameless, vigilant, sober, and of good behaviour, not given to wine or filthy lucre.*^s But has this been the general character of the *Roman Pontiffs*? Have not some been reputed magicians and necromancers,^h and others undoubted monsters of iniquity? Witness the *Alexanders*, the *Hildebrands*, the *Gregorys*, the *Bonifaces*, whose lewd and flagitious lives are hardly to be parallel'd in history. *Baronius* their own historian confesses, that for a succession of 50 Popes, not one pious or virtuous man sat in the chair; some were advanced to the papal dignity at 10 or 12 years of age; others have been murderers and whoremongers, not to mention the accounts in history of a female Pope. Are these the heirs of *St. Peter*, and vicars of Christ upon earth? Can the apostolical or sacerdotal character be convey'd thro' such impure canals? How prophane was that saying of Pope

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^s 1 Tim. iii. 2.^h Acts & Mon. V. I. p. 675.

*Leo X. Quàm lucrosa nobis est fabula Christi!*ⁱ
What a rare market have we made of this fable of
Jesus Christ! “ And indeed (says archbishop
 “ *Tillotson*^k) there is not a more compendious
 “ way of persuading men that the Christian
 “ religion is a fable, than to set up a lewd and
 “ vicious man as the oracle of it.”

The successors of *St. Peter* should be *found*
in the faith, because our Lord hath pray'd that
 their faith should not fail. And yet, notwith-
 standing their confident pretences to infallibi-
 lity, several bishops of *Rome* have been con-
 demned and deposed for heresy, ¹ their own
 general councils being judges. But if the
 writings of the New Testament be the standard
 of orthodoxy, what a monstrous train of do-
 ctrines have they introduced contrary to, and
 subversive of the faith once delivered to the
 saints! ---- But I forbear descending to parti-
 culars, lest I should encroach on the province
 of my worthy brother who next succeeds me,
 and who is much more equal to the service.

Further, the true successors of *St. Peter*
 should be *chosen by the proper persons, and in a*
disinterested manner. In ancient time the cler-
 gy and people of *Rome* elected their own
 bishops, the order of *Cardinals* not being
 known in the Christian church for almost a
 thousand years; nor were they the sole Ele-
 ctors, till the constitutions of Pope *Gregory X*,
^m above 1200 years after Christ. But suppo-
 sing the choice to be in them, let us view the
 Con-

ⁱ Spanh. p. 1891. ^k V. II. p. 251.

¹ Pope *John XXIII.* and others, ^m Spanh. 1709.

Conclave and observe whether the Holy Ghost sits on every head and directs every vote. Is there no criminal ambition? No bribery and corruption? Are there no simoniacal practices? Do not the interests of the several potentates of *Europe* govern the ballot as much or more than the exemplary piety and capacity of the candidates? If the world is not very uncharitable, the intrigues of the Conclave exceed the most refined policy of all the courts of *Europe* together.----Blessed Jesus! Are these the guardians of thy doctrine, the pillars of thy church and kingdom? Can persons advanced by such infamous methods be thy representatives or successors of thy holy apostle?

And after all the regulations that have been made in the choice of a Pope, by confining the election to the Cardinals, by shutting them up in their cells, and allowing none to converse with them till two thirds are agreed, yet the line of succession has been notoriously broken.----For several years there was no Pope at all, then two or three together, ⁿ who divided the profits, and spent them in all kinds of rioting and debauchery. *Onuphrius* in his lives of the Popes reckons up 30 schisms in the *Roman* church, and *Baronius* admits 22, the most considerable of which in the 14th Century continued 50 years; one Pope residing at *Rome*, and his brother Pope at *Avignon* in *France*, each anathematizing the other, and condemning his decrees. Now in every schism, one at least must be the usurper; if the Popes

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^a Spanh. 1516, 1818.

at *Rome* were the rightful successors of *St. Peter*, all the holy orders conferred by those at *Avignon* must be null; and if we should trace this back through twenty or thirty divisions, I doubt the line of succession would be lost long before we come up to *St. Peter*; so that if the right of the scriptures, and administration of the sacraments be the proper inheritance of those only who are heirs of the apostles, by an uninterrupted lineage, it may reasonably be questioned whether there be any Christian church or clergyman in the world; but thanks be to God the Christian religion does not hang upon so slender a thread.

Seventhly, We may argue against the supremacy, from *the extent of the office which it is not possible for a single person to discharge*. The duty of an universal Pastor is to *govern and feed the whole church*; but who can manage universal empire? What Atlantick shoulder can sustain the burden of dispensing justice to the whole world? What strength of body or vigor of mind can go through the business of hearing all appeals, of deciding all controversies, and of rectifying all disorders in the whole universe? For God has promised *to give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his Possession.*° If therefore our Lord had intended such a general officer in his church, he would have furnished some persons with superior abilities to the rest of mankind to fill the chair; But is any such peculiar genius found amongst them?

° *Psal. ii. 8.*

them? To say this may be done by *Legates* or *Nuncios*, is nothing to the purpose, because the Pope only is infallible, and therefore all appeals are referred to himself. Besides, how vast must be the expence, how great the delay of justice, and how tedious the journeys for men to travel with their suits from all parts of the habitable world to *Rome* for a decision? If the government of a kingdom of moderate extent, be as much as one wise prince can manage; or if a small diocese be sufficient to employ the time and labours of a faithful bishop; how impossible must it be for a clergyman advanced in years, in the decline of life, and under visible decays of body and mind to direct and govern the Christian world.

The other branch of the episcopal function is *to feed the sheep*; this was given in charge to *St. Peter*, and is incumbent upon all his successors. If his *Holiness* therefore would discharge his pastoral duty, he ought not to sit in his chair at *Rome*, but travel through the unbelieving nations, in order to their conversion. Were the shepherds of *Israel* cursed, ^p *because they eat the fat, and cloathed themselves with the wool, and killed them that were fed, but did not feed the flock?* What then must be the portion of an universal bishop that never preaches at all? Does the Pope visit his diocese, or labour in word or doctrine? Does he feed his flock with knowledge and understanding? No, but he takes away the key of knowledge, and having obliged the people to shut their eyes, puts
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^p Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4.

into their hands pardons, indulgences, and consecrated toys, fitter to please and quiet froward children, than to furnish a reasonable mind with religion or virtue.

Now if we lay these things together, and consider, the silence of the sacred records and genuine remains of antiquity about a supreme visible head; the uncertainty of St. *Peter's* being Bishop of *Rome*, and of the supremacy's being granted not only to him, but his successors, *upon which their whole title depends*; the character of those who have sat in the Papal chair; the impossibility of deriving their lineage from St. *Peter* thro' so many schisms and divisions; and the extent of the office, which is beyond the limits of a finite capacity to discharge, it will amount to a demonstration that the hierarchy of the church of *Rome* is built upon the *Sand*, and that their Popes have no better a claim to an apostolical supremacy over the Christian world, than to their extraordinary gifts and powers.

I shall conclude this discourse with the following remarks.

First, That *Jesus Christ is the only supreme head of his Church*. This is the constant language of scripture, *One is your master, even Christ*.----^a *He is the head of the body, the church, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*.----^r *God has put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church*.----^s *I would have you know, (says the apostle to the Corinthians) that the head of every man is*

^a Col. i. 18.

^r Eph. i. 22.

^s 1 Cor. xi. 3.

is Christ, and the head of Christ is God. Should it not rather have been, the head of every man is the Pope, and the head of the Pope is Christ? But no head upon earth is capable of governing such a body, nor may any man assume this honour to himself; the Son of God alone is equal to this high station, who holds the stars in his right hand, and by virtue of the immensity of his presence, is capable of governing and feeding the diffusive body of his church in every part of the world, *‘ Which being united to him their head, by joints and bands, receiveth nourishment, and encreases with the increase of God.* Let no man therefore dare to take the sceptre out of his hand, and place it in the hands of a frail man, whose breath is in his nostrils. Kings and Princes may be protectors of the church, and defenders of its faith from oppression and violence within their dominions, but Christ only is our living head.

Secondly, *The unity of the Catholick church does not consist in its relation to one visible head, but in its union to Christ.* All that profess true faith in *him*, and love to his disciples, and who adorn their profession by undissembled piety and virtue, are members of that one mystical body of which he is head; for *there is but one body and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and thro’ all, and in you all.* “ There “ is no mention in scripture, or primitive antiquity, of an union of all Christians under “ one

‘ Colos. ii, 19.
p. 293,

“ Barrow of Unity of the Church,

“ one political head, (says the judicious Dr.
 “ *Barrow*) nor does it consist with the na-
 “ ture and genius of the gospel kingdom,
 “ which is not of this world, but disavows
 “ politick artifices, and fleshly wisdom; it dis-
 “ countenances the imposition of all new laws
 “ and precepts, but such as are necessary for
 “ order and edification; it disclaims all world-
 “ ly power and dominion, and is to be go-
 “ verned by gentleness and meekness, argu-
 “ ment and persuasion: Whereas if it was a
 “ political body, (says the Doctor) it must be
 “ the reverse of all this; it must be supported
 “ by riches and wealth, by force and violence,
 “ by courts of judicature and penal laws. All
 “ which things do much disagree from the
 “ original design of the Christian church,
 “ which is averse from pomp, doth reject do-
 “ mination, does not require craft, wealth,
 “ or force to maintain it, but did at first, and
 “ may subsist without any such means.”

Thirdly, *A supreme jurisdiction and autho-
 rity over the Christian church is the very mark
 and character of the man of sin and son of per-
 dition; who is said, “ to oppose, or exalt him-
 self above all that is called God, or that is wor-
 shipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple
 of God, shewing that he is God.* Kings and Em-
 perors, in the language of scripture, are called
Gods, on account of their sovereign authority
 and power; but his *Holiness* of *Rome* has de-
 clared the *spiritual power* to be above the *tem-
 poral*; and has shewed that he is *God*, not
 only

only by accepting the titles of Deity, as * *Most holy Father; Lord God; Priest of the World, and Vicar General of Christ upon Earth*; but by treading on the necks of Emperors, by kicking off their crowns with his foot, and obliging them to hold his stirrup, when he mounted his horse: The Emperor *Henry IV.* with his Empress and little children waited three days and three nights barefoot, at the gates of the Pope's palace for absolution, and after all lost his territories, which the haughty Pope gave to *Rodolphus*, with this inscription about the crown: † *Petra dedit Petro, Petrus Diadema Rodulpho: The Rock gave the Crown to Peter, and Peter gives it to Rodolph.* If we take a view of his Holiness in his Pontifical Grandeur, we may see him sitting in the Temple of God, upon a Throne high and lifted up, with a triple crown on his head, a triple cross in one hand, and a naked sword in the other; with the keys of the kingdom of Heaven at his girdle, and a seven-fold seal, in token of the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghost; surrounded with Cardinals arrayed in purple, attended with ambassadors from all nations; and when he appears in publick, multitudes lie prostrate in his presence, and pay him the most sacred and divine worship. Can this be the successor of *poor Peter*, who told the lame man at the gate of the Temple, that silver and gold he had none? Or is it not rather the character of that *Anti-christ, whom God has threatned to consume*

* AEs & Mon. V. I. p. 10. Spanh. p. 1897.

† Ib. V. II. p. 202.

sume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming.

Fourthly, *How dangerous must it be to continue in a church, the validity of all whose administrations depends upon an uninterrupted succession from St. Peter; for if the line should fail, or be broken, the whole Christian world must return to Heathenism, and be left to the uncovenanted mercies of God. Surely if our Lord had designed to hang the whole of his religion upon this chain, he would have preserved it entire, and made every link of it visible to the satisfaction of the whole world; but as things now stand, all is uncertain; a Christian can never be satisfied that he hears the word of God from the lips of one that has a right to interpret it, or receives the holy sacrament from the hands of one that can derive his orders, in a direct line, from the apostles. It is therefore unaccountable that any who call themselves Protestants, should be fond of deriving the validity of their Sacerdotal Functions thro' this impure and corrupt channel, which has been so often cut off from its fountain, and is so far from the apostolick purity, that it seems for several ages to have had no other parent, than the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. The Protestant religion is a much safer way of salvation, which admits persons duly qualified and solemnly separated to the pastoral office, to be rightful ministers of Jesus Christ, and entitled to administer all Christian ordinances with efficacy, wherever the providence of God shall cast their lot.*

Fifthly,

Fifthly, *We may observe the vassalage and slavery of the Romish communion, which requires an absolute subjection of soul and body, to the sovereign will and pleasure of the Pope.* Men must not judge for themselves, but take every thing upon the word of the Priest, who will insure their salvation at the peril of his own. The inspired apostle *Paul* never claimed this privilege; he would have ^a *Every one persuaded in his own mind, and if they differed, to do it in love*; he disclaims a dominion over the people's faith; and the apostle *Peter* forbids the Elders who had the oversight of the flock, ^a *to lord it over God's heritage.* But is this the manner of the church of *Rome*, which requires a blind and implicit faith from all her members, and commands us to lay aside our understandings in order to become good Christians? Strange! That men should have liberty to exercise their reason in the common affairs of life, and be obliged to shut their eyes and be stark blind in matters of faith; nay, the Papists require us not only to lay aside our understandings, but to believe in direct opposition and defiance to them; for if the Pope should decree virtue to be vice, and vice virtue, we are bound in conscience, (says Cardinal *Bellarmino*) to believe it. Is there any thing like this among the most barbarous Nations?

But not content with abusing our consciences they deprive us of our estates and liberties; Popery and slavery are inseparable; and an Inquisition in the church is a sure mark of slavery

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^a Phil. iii. 15, 16.^a 1 Pet. v. 3.

in the state. The liberties of *England* grew up with the Reformation and will certainly die with it ; when Popery got possession of the *British* throne in the person of King *James II*, our laws were presently suspended, our charters taken from us, and our whole constitution subverted : the knife was then at our throats, and the only choice that seemed left, was to turn or burn. The populace were alarmed, and Protestants shook their chains and groaned for a deliverer, which God of his infinite mercy sent us in the person of the great King *William III*, who without violence or blood delivered this nation from Popery ; and all *Europe* from the chains and fetters, that a great and successful tyrant had prepared for them.

It follows from hence, *in the last place, that an open toleration of the Popish religion is inconsistent with the safety of a free people and a Protestant Government.* Every *Roman-Catholick* having professed allegiance to a foreign power must be an avowed enemy to his King and country. It is therefore made death by a very severe law for any priest to pervert any of his Majesty's subjects to Popery, or for any private person to be willingly reconciled to the *Romish* communion, because as often as Popery gains a proselyte, the King loses a subject. The words of the statute^b are these, which I the rather mention because their laity may not be acquainted with them : “ All persons pretending
 “ to have power, who shall absolve, persuade,
 “ or withdraw any of the *Queen's* subjects
 “ from the religion now established, to the

^b 23 Eliz. Cap. i.

“ *Romish*

“ *Romish* religion, or move them to promise
 “ obedience to the See of *Rome*, being there-
 “ of lawfully convicted, shall suffer as in case
 “ of high-treason.---And if any person after
 “ the end of this parliament, be willingly ab-
 “ solved, or withdrawn as aforesaid, or wil-
 “ lingly be reconciled, or shall promise any
 “ obedience to any pretended prince, poten-
 “ tate, or usurped authority from *Rome*, then
 “ every such person their procurers and coun-
 “ sellors being thereof lawfully convicted, shall
 “ be taken, tried, and judged, and shall suffer
 “ as in cases of high-treason.” So that, *not*
only every priest, but every new convert to Popery
is a traytor, and a dead man by the laws of his
country; the most sacred obligations being then
 judged an insufficient security, from men who
 had delivered up their consciences into the hands
 of those who pretend to bind and loose men from
 their sins, and to absolve them from the most so-
 lemn oaths, or dispense with them, for the
 service of the Catholick cause.---Far be it from
 Protestant Dissenters to plead for persecution
 or sanguinary laws, or even negative discouragements
 for religious principles not subversive of
 the foundations of society and civil government.
 Every faithful subject ought to be protected
 in his *religious* as well as *civil rights*, but if
 men’s religion teaches them rebellion; and
 every convert to Popery is by principle an ene-
 my to the constitution of his country, and a
 friend to the *Pretender to his Majesty’s crown*
and dignity; surely the government may pre-
 serve itself. Besides ’tis a known maxim of
 Popery,

Popery, and was decreed in the ninth session of the council of *Constance*,^a that *no faith is to be kept with Hereticks*, or Protestants ; and our histories abundantly testify that where they have had power they have religiously observed it, as appears by the violation of the *Edict* of *Nantes* in *France* against the faith of the most solemn treaties ; the massacres of *Paris* and *Ireland*, in which no ties of nature or friendship could prevent the staining their hands with the blood of their nearest Protestant relations ; not to insist upon their many plots and conspiracies against the reformed religion in *England*, and particularly that wherein King, Lords, and Commons assembled in Parliament were to be blown up at once : only I must observe, that all the conspirators were absolved, and *Garnet* their provincial, who performed the office, is commended by *Bellarmino* as a man of incomparable sanctity and holiness of life.

But they tell us their natures are now changed, and their principles not so fierce and bloody as formerly. Are they so ? *Then may the Ethiopian change his skin and the leper his spots.* Have we already forgot the late cruelties at *Thorn* the numbers of *Palatines* that were driven from their native country purely for religion about 20 years ago, and the present usage of the *Saltzburghers* by their spiritual tyrant ?---I would not fill your heads with imaginary dangers ; but this I am sure of, great industry is used by numbers of priests (even in defiance of a law that makes it death) to undermine the Protestant religion. Bribes are given, and large promises

^a Spanh. Ec. Hist. p. 1845.

promises of support and encouragement to the meaner people; catechisms and books of devotion are privately dispersed; Mass-houses are erected in several parts of the city and suburbs, and priests officiate almost with open doors; they insinuate themselves into private families, and kindly relieve the necessitous and distress'd, on condition of their living and dying in the bosom of the Catholick church. These are the new methods of conversion. But shall Protestants be asleep while the Enemy is cutting away the ground from under their feet? Have we any concern for the reformed religion, for the liberties of our country, and for the welfare of our dear children and posterity? Let us then stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Let Churchmen and Dissenters lay aside their jealousies of each other, and bend their united forces against the common enemy. And may the wisdom of the legislature be directed to such measures consistent with the laws of Christianity, and the natural rights of mankind, as may strengthen the Protestant interest and effectually prevent the growth of a religion which would rob us of all that is dear to us as Men and Christians!

The ministers of Christ are obliged more especially to appear in the front of the battle, not only to animate their people and arm them against the approaching danger, but to endeavour the delivering these deluded souls out of the snare of the Devil, by persuading them to read the Holy Scriptures, and use the understandings God has given them to distinguish between truth and error; and by praying that
God

God would enlighten their minds, and give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth: but if after our most fervent prayers and kind endeavours for their conversion, they will shut their eyes, and go on blindfold in a religion that has neither scripture, reason, nor common sense to support it; if they will profess allegiance to a foreign tyrant, and vow the destruction of their King and Country, when their superiors shall command them to the service; we may then lawfully join in that form of prayer and thanksgiving appointed by Parliament for the fifth of *November*, before it was altered by archbishop *Laud*. “ —Be
 “ thou still, O Lord, our mighty protector, and
 “ scatter our cruel enemies which delight in
 “ blood; infatuate their counsels, and root
 “ out that *Babylonish* and antichristian Sect,
 “ which say with *Jerusalem*, Down with it,
 “ Down with it to the ground. — And to that
 “ end strengthen the hands of our gracious
 “ King, the nobles, and magistrates of the
 “ land, with judgment and justice, to cut off
 “ those workers of iniquity, whose religion is
 “ rebellion, whose faith is faction, whose
 “ practice is murdering of souls and bodies;
 “ and to root them out of the confines and li-
 “ mits of this kingdom, that they may never
 “ prevail against us, and triumph in the ruins
 “ of thy church; and give us grace by true and
 “ serious repentance to avert these and the like
 “ judgments from us, for thy dear Son’s sake,
 “ our only mediator and advocate;” to whom
 be glory in the churches throughout all ages
 world without end. *Amen.*



